Mixing Cheat Sheet

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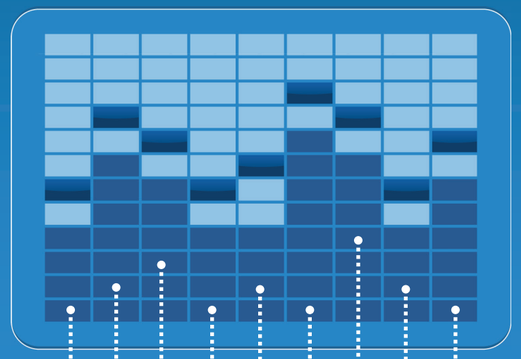

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

MINDSET

AUDIENCE
CONCEPT
RAW ▶ ADEQUATE ▶ ELEVATED ▶ STABLE

ACOUSTICS

ROOM
REFERENCE TOOLS
MONITORS

BALANCE

VOLUME
LOUDNESS
ARRANGEMENT

PANNING

CENTER
LEFT
RIGHT
MID

FREQUENCY

INSTRUMENT RANGE
EQ

DEPTH

REVERB
DELAY

EFFECTS

MODULATION
DISTORTION
FILTERS

DYNAMICS

ADSR
PEAKS
COMPRESSION

INTEREST

FOCUS
UNIQUE
AUTOMATION

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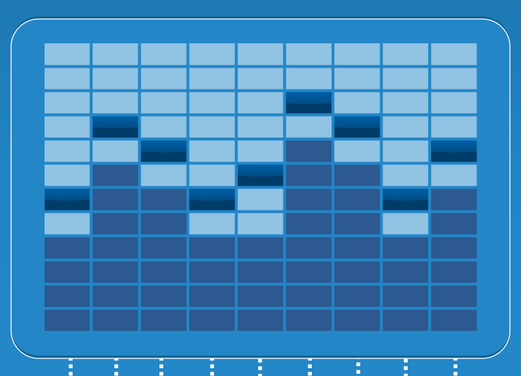
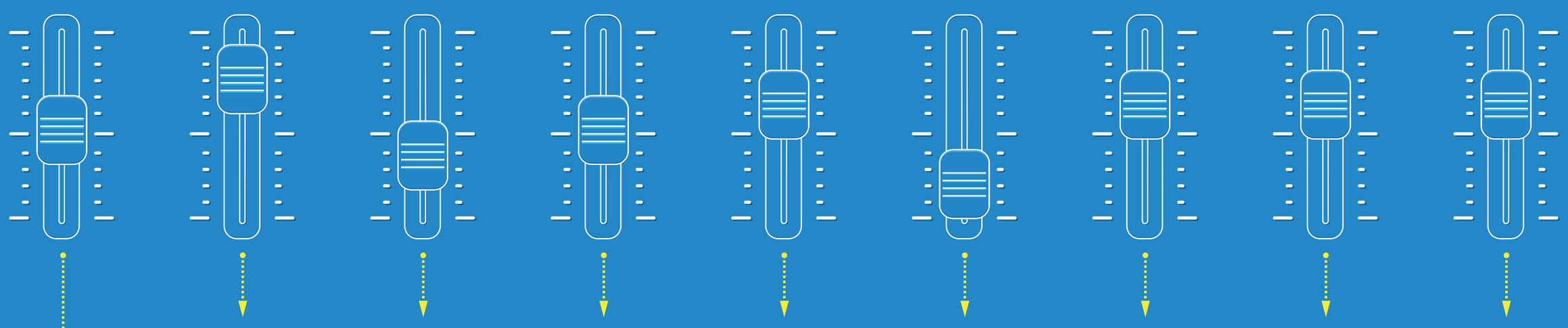


1 MINDSET
2 ACOUSTICS
3 BALANCE
4 PANNING
5 FREQUENCY
6 DEPTH
7 EFFECTS
8 DYNAMICS
9 INTEREST



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1 MINDSET

AUDIENCE:
You might be mixing audio for a specific audience. How do they listen to music and what do they like? What can you do to move them?

CONCEPT:
Is there a specific concept or goal for the production and mix? Define some parameters or boundaries to guide you.

RAW > ADEQUATE > ELEVATED > STABLE:
Some milestones to consider are taking the mix from raw to adequate to elevated to stable. Once your mix is adequate, aim to elevate the mix and then stabilize it. Recognize that it will never be perfect to your ears so if it's elevated beyond adequate and stabilized, you can call it complete.

2 ACOUSTICS

ROOM:
Identify room modes, room reflections, absorptive and diffusive materials. Pay attention to how the room is shaping the sound.

REFERENCE TOOLS:
Listen to reference CDs periodically to calibrate your ears. Sound level meters and acoustical analysis tools can help you calibrate your monitors and listening level, and analyze room modes and frequency ranges.

MONITORS:
Position your speakers properly in the room. Form an equilateral triangle with the listening position. Verify your monitor frequency response.

3 BALANCE

LEVEL:
Watch your track and master meters for clipping and both peak and average levels, pre-fader. Practice safe levels.

LOUDNESS:
Be aware of Fletcher-Munson curves. Be aware how level, frequency, and duration of sounds impact your perception of loudness. Check mix at several volume levels. 83 dB SPL is standard in the film world.

ARRANGEMENT:
Emphasize tension and release. Be aware of conflicting elements and frequency masking. Create contrast. Highlight the focus of the mix.

4 PANNING

CENTER:
Place prominent elements and low frequencies in the center.

LEFT/RIGHT/MID:
Drummer perspective or audience perspective? Band perspective or audience perspective? Build counterpoint. Create clarity and balance from left to right with equal rhythmic and frequency activity distribution. Aim for no gaping holes between nine and three o'clock.

5 FREQUENCY

INSTRUMENT RANGE:
Match frequency ranges to instruments and timbres and distribute evenly or appropriately.

EQ:
Aim to evenly distribute different frequency ranges and characteristic frequency centers. Distribute various elements throughout the frequency spectrum for the desired and appropriate clarity.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_key_frequencies

http://www.independentrecording.net/irn/resources/freqchart/main_display.htm

6 DEPTH

REVERB:
Real or Plate/Spring? Wet = Far. Dry = Close. Pre-delay for clarity. Special effects with gates or reverse reverb.

DELAY:
Short delays for track doubling effects. 30 ms delay panned opposite the original signal for wide stereo signals (Haas effect). 50 ms delay to simulate a small room or space. Slapback echo between 65 and 150 ms. Tempo-matched delay for rhythmic effects. Multi-tap delay can produce several different delays at once. Insert a delay in front of plate or spring reverbs to create more realistic effects (predelay).

7 EFFECTS

MODULATION:
Flanging creates washy phase cancellations throughout the frequency spectrum. Phasing is a narrow-band EQ cut that is swept back and forth through the frequency spectrum. Chorus uses multiple delays for thickness and richness. Tremolo and vibrato vary volume and pitch, respectively.

DISTORTION:
Some types of distortion include tube distortion, tape distortion, distortion effect pedals, hard clipping, soft clipping, transformer clipping, noise, record pops and scratches, and speaker distortion.

FILTERS:
Some filtering effects include band pass filters, filter sweeps, envelope filters, and wah-wahs.

8 DYNAMICS

PEAKS AND VALLEYS:
Make the climaxes the loudest part of the mix. Changes in volume provide dynamics.

COMPRESSION:
Use compressors when you need to control dynamics and for effect. Types of dynamic control include limiting, multi-band compression, de-essing, gating, envelope shaping, sidechaining, and parallel compression. Compression works on individual sounds, groups of instruments or sounds, and the entire mix.

ADSR:
Listen to the attack, decay, sustain, and release of sounds. Contrasting and grouping sounds can alter their dynamics.

9 INTEREST

FOCUS:
What's the main point of interest? What's the most important element?

UNIQUE:
Find a unique element and make it stand out or find a way to make an ordinary element sound unique.

AUTOMATION:
Use automation for dynamics, mutes, panning, effects, and interest.